

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held on Wednesday, 17 December 2008 at 2.00 pm  
at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury**

**Present**

Councillors Lt Col Allen, Box, Major Coles, Dr Drummond, Gibbon, Greenaway, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak (Vice-Chair), Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Mason, Mellings, Minnery, Picken, and West (Chair).

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eade and Williams.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Members were reminded that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting before any item, in which they had a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3 Non-Exempt Minutes**

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 15 October 2008.

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 15 October 2008, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**4 Public Questions**

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

**5 Standards Committee**

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 27 October 2008.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 27 October 2008.

## **6 Strategy and Resources Committee**

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 13 November 2008.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 13 November 2008.

## **7 Audit and Performance Management Committee**

Members received the non-confidential minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 27 November 2008.

Councillor Major Coles requested that the Chair and Vice Chair of Committees be identified on future minutes. The Management Support Officer undertook to do this.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the non-confidential minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 27 November 2008.

## **8 Human Resources Committee**

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 4 December 2008.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 4 December 2008.

Prior to Item 9 being presented to the Fire Authority, the Chair thanked Roger Woliter, for his work and support as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority and presented him with a Fire Service plaque.

## **9 Appointment of Clerk and Monitoring Officer and Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer**

Roger Woliter, the Fire Authority's Clerk and Monitoring Officer will be leaving his post as Head of Legal Services at Telford & Wrekin Council in January 2009. This report recommended that Jonathan Eatough, the officer appointed as his replacement at Telford & Wrekin Council, also be formally appointed as the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** that Members

- a) Appoint Jonathan Eatough as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority; and
- b) Request the continued appointment of Matthew Cumberbatch as Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority.

## 10 Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group Update

This report advised Members of the progress made by the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Members' Working Group (the Group) towards identifying and developing the strategic IRMP priorities for the next three year period. In addition it also presented the feedback from the 2009/10 Staff Consultation and an update on ongoing reviews. Members were requested to approve the recommendations made by the Group at their meeting held on 25 November 2008.

The Fire Authority agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to ADO Whelan for the work he had undertaken on IRMP prior to his retirement.

The Head of Risk Management highlighted the feedback provided by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and their commitment to the IRMP process in Shropshire.

Councillor Minnery as Chair of the IRMP Members' Working Group thanked the Head of Risk Management for his presentation to the meeting and endorsed his comments about the positive relationship that the Fire Authority has with the Unions. Councillor Minnery also thanked those Fire Authority members who had attended the IRMP sessions throughout the year and commented that their attendance at the sessions is appreciated by Wholetime and Retained Duty System staff.

Members were asked to note that the IRMP consultation process will start earlier in 2009 and will begin after the elections for the new Shropshire Council have taken place.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) note the responses to the 2009/10 consultation process (appendix 1) and the full Fire Brigades Union response (appendix 2);
- b) note the progress made with ongoing reviews;
- c) approve the strategic IRMP Priorities, as proposed by the Group;
- d) agree that these priorities be consulted upon as part of the budget consultation process in January 2009;
- e) agree to progress the Retained Development Project as part of the IRMP process; and
- f) approve the use of £107,000 from the 2009/10 growth budget, to kick start the Retained Development Project.

## 11 2009/10 and Later Years Budget Summary

The report summarised the budget position so far, and sought approval to the basis of consultation during January 2009, leading to a final decision by the Fire Authority on 11 February 2009.

The Treasurer provided the following update on issues detailed within the report which had changed since the meeting papers were published.

It may be necessary to amend upwards some of the schemes in the Capital Programme and if so, these will be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee. The Treasurer therefore suggested that recommendation ii) be proposed subject to any amendment that may be needed. The Capital Grant has been confirmed at £1.292 million. This is better than anticipated and when coupled with the Capital Reserve of £1.2 million means a reduced amount of £1 million will need to be borrowed for the major Capital Scheme, at Shrewsbury, however, as yet, there is no absolute detail on the cost of this scheme.

The level of efficiencies achieved by fire authorities in 2008/09 now has to be published on 2009/10 Council Tax bills as a percentage of the 2007/08 base budget. For this Authority, the figure is £201,000 or 1.1% of the base. This equates to £1 worth for a Band D property. The national average for fire and rescue authorities is £2 per Band D property but these figures are rounded to the nearest pound and therefore may actually be closer than they appear.

The Fire Authority has received a letter regarding capping but this does not make the situation much clearer than the Ministerial Statement report. Shropshire Council has confirmed the Band D Council Tax base, which means £89,000 less than planned, will be received. This will also have a cumulative effect on future budget planning.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- i Will base its revenue expenditure planning and consultation on the totals set out in Appendix C (2009/10 £20,649,000);
- ii Will base its capital programme on that set out in report 6f of the Green Book (2009./10 £2,150,000) but subject to detailed consideration of the Wellington and Shrewsbury schemes, and any other scheme changes especially in light of prudential guidelines;
- iii Agree to the recommendations in Reserves and Provisions set out in paragraph 8 of the report;
- iv Continue to base its planning and consultation on a precept increase of 3.9% each year; and
- v Request Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package on 22 January 2009, for final decision of the Fire Authority on 11 February 2009.

## **12 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Update**

The Fire Authority received a verbal update from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), on the Regional Control Centre (RCC). The verbal update covered key issues from the FiReControl Business Case Part 2 and followed on from the technical briefing which had been held before the Fire Authority meeting.

The move to a 9 Regional Control Centres, from 46, is due to Operational Resilience and enhanced capability. The project dates have been re-evaluated and the cut-over has been extended by up to nine months. This will mean that Shropshire will now cut-over to the RCC on 14 February 2011.

The West Midlands RCC will cost approximately £700,000 more than the existing five Control Centres in the region cost due to resilience issues. The Government have agreed to provide a grant to cover these resilience costs for three years which will then be reviewed. With this in mind, the RCC Director is being encouraged to look at the costs of the West Midlands RCC.

Councillor Allen, the Fire Authority's Director on the Board of the FiReControl Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) gave a short verbal update on the recent LACC Board meeting and highlighted that computer systems may be a problem.

Councillor Box asked what would happen to the ancillary jobs that are currently undertaken by Fire Control staff. The DCFO explained that within Shropshire, Fire Control undertakes 'out of scope' work for example officer rotas. These duties are currently being looked at to assess how they can be absorbed into the Service, as these costs also need to be within the costs of the RCC project.

Councillor Major Coles asked if job descriptions were currently the same across the five existing Control Centres. The DCFO replied that the Job Descriptions and Terms and Conditions for Fire Control staff, across the five Services in the West Midlands region, were all different.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note both of the verbal updates.

### **13 Accommodation Schemes Update**

This report advised the Fire Authority of the current position with the Shrewsbury and Wellington accommodation schemes.

The Head of Resources showed the Fire Authority, some images of the proposed Wellington development (copy attached to signed minutes).

The Head of Resources also reported that there have been delays due to difficulties in phrasing the terms of the freehold agreement that was originally proposed between TCAT and the Fire Authority and a new proposal concerning the freehold is currently being looked at by the Legal Advisors. The Learning Skills Council have also queried if TCAT are getting value for money from this project. TCAT are negotiating this further but are still aiming to start work on the development in May / June 2009. The Head of Resources confirmed that valuations have been carried out which confirm that the project does represent value for money.

The designs for Wellington are currently being discussed with the firefighters and architects and the provision of temporary accommodation is being worked on, with two possible solutions being identified. One is to secure accommodation in temporary buildings such as portable cabins; the other is to use a local hotel for the provision of accommodation and provide temporary buildings for appliances etc.

Councillor Minnery asked why this report was being considered in open rather than closed session as he felt that there several important issues which needed to be discussed by the Fire Authority and this could not be done in open session. Councillor Minnery also raised concerns about the Urgency Committee being asked to make a decision on the legal agreements. It was explained that the report was to be noted and that the Fire Authority were not being asked to make any decisions at this stage. The Chair suggested that the alternative method for considering any legal agreements, where decisions were required in a timescale incompatible with planned Fire Authority meetings, would be to call a special meeting of the full Fire Authority rather than the Urgency Committee. Councillor Minnery confirmed that he would prefer this course of action.

Councillor Gibbon left the meeting at this point (2.55 pm)

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note

- a) the current position with both schemes; and
- b) that the Urgency Committee is able to consider and approve the necessary legal agreements on the transfer of the freehold land known as 'Wellington Fire Station' to TCAT in accordance with the decision previously approved by the Fire Authority on 16 July 2008, if a decision is required in a timescale incompatible with planned Fire Authority meetings.

## **14 Member Champion Presentations**

Councillor Dr Jones gave a presentation on her activities as Risk Management and Audit Champion and circulated her presentation slides (a copy of which are attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Box commented that the planned Audits for 2008/09 seemed ambitious as they were major pieces of work to undertake. The Treasurer explained that this work is planned with the Auditors from Shropshire County Council who assess the work involved and report back to the Fire Authority so that adjustments can be made as necessary to the programme of work.

Councillor Gibbon returned to the meeting at this point (3.10 pm)

Councillor Hartin asked if there had been any feedback from the Taster Sessions held in November and in particular if there had been any feedback from the participants. The DCFO explained that take-up for the Taster Sessions had not been as good as previously but feedback had been positive from those that attended. Councillor Hartin asked if the sessions had been focussed in Telford. The DCFO confirmed that the sessions had been held in Telford but the purchase of a portable testing unit is being investigated which would allow sessions to be held at other locations. The DCFO also explained that work is being undertaken with TCAT to develop entry level courses for the Fire Service.

**Resolved** that Members note the presentation of the Risk Management and Audit Champion.

## **15 European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo da Vinci)**

### **15a Members' Falck Visit**

Councillors Greenaway, Dr Jones and Mellings and the Head of Risk Management gave a presentation on their visit to Falck in October 2008 as part of the Leonardo exchange programme. The presentation slides were circulated to the meeting (a copy is attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Hurst-Knight left the meeting at this point (3.35 pm)

Councillor Mason asked what the approach to fire safety was in Denmark i.e. is the focus on prevention instead of cure as here. The Head of Risk Management explained that Falck are very much response driven in relation to fire safety but that some of the regional brigades have seen the benefits of Community Fire Safety (CFS) during the exchange visits with Shropshire and are now starting to undertake CFS work in their areas. Councillor Greenaway further explained that Falck do want to undertake fire safety work but this needs to be driven by the public through elected members due to the way in which the service is provided. Councillor Mellings commented that in terms of political accountability this appears to be a low priority for the local Councils.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the presentation.

### **15b Chair's Visit to Hungary**

Councillor West gave a short presentation on his recent visit to Hungary as part of the Leonardo Exchange Programme and circulated his presentation slides (a copy of which are attached to the signed minutes).

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the presentation.

Councillor Hurst-Knight returned to the meeting at this point (3.40 pm)

### **15c European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo da Vinci)**

This paper was an interim summary report regarding the Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme 2008, and sought Member endorsement of proposals for a further submission for European Commission (EC) funding to support a new programme for 2009.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) reported that a Celebration of Success event will be held for the Leonardo Programme 2008 on 3 February 2009, 10 am – 1 pm, which all Fire Authority Members will be invited to attend.

The ACFO asked the Fire Authority to consider incorporating the Lifelong Learning Programme into the Corporate Aims of the Fire Authority. Councillor Jones moved that the report recommendations be accepted with the addition that the Lifelong Learning Programme be incorporated into the Corporate Aims. This was seconded by Councillor Minnery and

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) note progress to date with the current Exchange Programme; and
- b) endorse the submission of a further application(s) for funding for 2009 and that the Lifelong Learning Programme be incorporated into the Fire Authority's Corporate Aims.

Councillors Gibbon and Hurst-Knight left the meeting at this point (4.00 pm)

### **16 Cycle to Work Scheme**

This report set out the method of operation of a cycle to work scheme operated by the Fire Authority and recommended that Members agree to the benefits accrued to the Authority, local authority partners and the environment by supporting the introduction of the scheme in to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

The DCFO explained that the value of bike and accessory has been set at £1,000 to include bikes for disabled riders.

Councillor Box queried the reference to cycle shops around Shrewsbury. The DCFO explained that Shrewsbury had been used as a central point and that cycle shops in all parts of the county were included.



Councillor Box felt that the Service could be seen to be discriminating against the lowest paid workers, i.e. those on minimum wage, with this scheme. The DCFO explained that Central Government do not allow any workers to participate in salary sacrifice schemes which would take them under the minimum wage threshold. It may, however, be possible to look at subsidising the scheme if necessary.

Councillor Holyoak moved the proposals and commented that she felt there were excellent health and environmental benefits to the scheme. Councillor Jones seconded this proposal.

Councillor Hartin queried the condition that the primary use of the cycle must be for travelling to and from work and how this would be monitored. The DCFO explained that there is currently no proposed method of monitoring this.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) agree to setting up the scheme in the Service noting the wide ranging benefits available;
- b) agree to initially open the scheme twice in the first 12 months and thereafter once per year;
- c) set the upper limit of bike and accessory value at £1,000;
- d) set aside £40,000 for the scheme from any underspend available;
- e) agree that Officers will set the fair terminal value at around 5%, depending on economic factors prevailing at any given time;
- f) agree that the Authority should use any surplus generated by the scheme to improve cycle facilities on stations / Headquarters;
- g) agree to the recommended provider; and
- h) task Officers with running the first scheme starting early 2009.

## **17 Members' Allowances**

The Fire Authority received a verbal update on the current position with Member Allowances from the Management Support Officer.

Councillor Major Coles requested that Members be informed of any increase to the level of subsistence payments. The Management Support Officer undertook to do this.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the verbal update.

### **Committee Clerks Note**

It has been confirmed that new rates of Member subsistence have been set and will take effect for any claims made from 1 January 2009. Details of these new rates will be provided to Members in January.

## 18 Meeting Dates 2009

This document advised Members of the 2009 meeting dates for the Fire Authority and its Committees, as approved by the Fire Authority in December 2007.

The Management Support Officer advised Members of some amendments to the dates given.

Councillor Minnery raised the issue of meetings in June 2009 which will need to be rearranged due to the elections for the Shropshire Council. The Management Support Officer undertook to revise these dates in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and Officers and to bring the amended dates to the February 2009 meeting of the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the 2009 meeting dates for the Fire Authority and its Committees.

Councillors Box and Minnery left the meeting at this point (4.20 pm)

## 19 Local Government Act 1972

**Resolved** that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 20, 21, 22 and 23 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 and also on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information, which the Government has directed should, for the time being, be kept confidential

## 20 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 15 October 2008.

Councillor Hartin commented that there was discrepancy in the attendance recorded for the meeting. The Management Support Officer undertook to rectify this before the minutes were signed by the Chair.

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 15 October 2008, be agreed, and that they be signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the amendment detailed above.

## 21 Audit and Performance Management Committee (Confidential)

Members received the confidential minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 27 November 2008.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the confidential minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 27 November 2008.

**22 Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2007/08 – Preliminary Results (Confidential)**

This report provided Members with an interim summary overview of the Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2007/08, together with the recently released, but currently embargoed, performance results in respect of Direction of Travel and Service Assessment.

The Fire Authority was very pleased with the feedback given and offered congratulations to Officers and staff.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report.

**23 Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

Members received the minutes of the Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel meeting, held on 13 November 2008 and considered the recommendation on page 2 of the notes.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel meeting, held on 13 November 2008, and agree the recommendation on page 2 of the minutes.

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....